

2.



Mr. Murray's

S E R M O N

ON THE DEATH OF

Mr. Ralph Cross.





G R A C E A N D G L O R Y :

O R,

HEAVEN GIVEN ONLY TO SAINTS.

2.

A

S E R M O N

PPEACHED AT THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

I N

N E W B U R Y - P O R T,

JAN 26, 1788,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

M^r. R A L P H C R O S S

ON THE 4th OF THAT MONTH,

ÆTAT. 82.

Published by request of the Mourners.

BY JOHN MURRAY, A. M.

PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

JUSTUM ET TENACEM PROPOSITI VIRUM,
SI FRACTUS ILLABATUR ORBIS,
IMPAVIDUM FERIENT RUINÆ.

HOR.

NEWBURY-PORT:

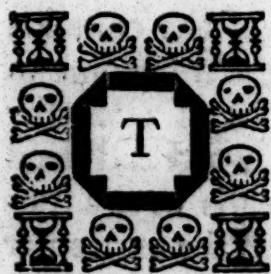
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A
F U N E R A L S E R M O N.

COLLOSSIANS 1. 12.

GIVING THANKS UNTO THE FA-
THER WHICH HATH MADE US
MEET TO BE PARTAKERS OF
THE INHERITANCE OF THE
SAINTS IN LIGHT.



H A T the doctrines of grace are opposed to the interest of virtue and godliness, was never suggested, unless by those who understood not their nature and felt not their influence. All others have a witness in themselves that no other doctrines can secure that interest. The matchless wisdom with which God has ever connected end and means shines out in its true lustre, in nothing so much as the salvation of sinners. This bliss is settled on them by an eternal purpose, it is true; but the steps by which it is to be attained, are beautifully connected each to the other, in a golden chain, that reaches from the beginning to the end of things; a chain from which one link cannot be broken off, without defeating the end, and spoiling the whole.

IF the kingdom of heaven be prepared for any, from before the foundation of the world: yet it never was designed to be their possession, until they shall first have been prepared for it. Are they predestinated to endless bliss? As the way to it they are also predestinated to be first conformed to the image of its Author. Holiness is the nature of that state—and holiness shall be the nature of all that shall enter it. Shall the elect be glorified at last? Then must they be sanctified in time. For this end they must be justified:—and therefore believe:—but in order to this, they must be effectually *called*: and thus whatever certainty there is that they shall never perish—the certainty is no less, that without holiness, they shall never see the LORD.

THIS is the leading sentiment of the context:—The consideration of it might well become us at any time, but the late departure of a worthy *Elder* of this church who both by word and deed was an eminent advocate for it, calls us to a special attention to it at present; and the particular request of the bereaved family obliges me now to offer you my aid therein.

IN the region of Phrygia, in Asia minor, near to Hierapolis and Laodicea, stood the city Colosse; which in modern times is better known by the name Chone;—just at the confluence of the rivers Lycus and Mæander. There it pleased the Lord of the vineyard early to employ the faithful ΕΡΑΦΡΑΣ in planting a church:—and the seeds of gospel-truth, sown there, soon sprang up in those fruits of faith and love,
which

which spread the fame of that new society of converts far and wide.—These recommended them to the charity of the Apostle so thoroughly, that they became a constant subject of his prayers and thanksgivings, during his continuance as a prisoner at Rome. It seems however, that the glorious morning of this church, was soon overcast with gloomy clouds. Of this sad change, Paul, in his imprisonment, being apprised by Epaphras himself, writes them this epistle as an antidote against the contagion then spreading.

His address is introduced by animating commendations of whatever he found right among them; and earnest prayers to the God of all grace for perfecting the good work he had begun there. In the words of the text, as if his heart had been suddenly assured of an answer of peace, both on his own behalf and theirs; he passes from prayer to thanksgiving to God the Father, for completing by his spirit the application of the redemption purchased by the merits of his Son; in making them fit for communion with himself in heaven.

In the 14th verse, he shews where the foundation of this good work within them was laid, viz. in the redemption wrought for them by the blood of CHRIST. This is what ensured them the remission of sins:—and as it is expressed in the 13th verse, delivered them from their natural bondage to the power of darkness—and made them free citizens of the gracious kingdom of CHRIST. The text states the issue of this translation; in the progressive work of the spirit in meetening them for heaven. All this he ascribes
to

to the *Father*; as he originated the whole plan in his eternal counsel—he, in the œconomy of that work, then settled, sent the Son to redeem; and he, thro' the Son, sends the Spirit to apply the purchased benefits to every subject. Hence, in this mediate sense it may be said that he made us *meet*; that is, *fit* or suitable for it.

THE word, tho' borrowed from the Hebrew idiom, and never again used by the apostle, except in 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6, is well known to signify *meetness* or competency; and here it is *meetness* for a *part* (literally) in the lot of the saints, *i. e.* *in the joys and glories reserved for them above*. A phraseology this which carries a manifest allusion to the manner of assigning to the Israelites by lot their respective portions in the land of Canaan, and makes an easy application of it to the divine allotment of the eternal inheritance of saints, in that heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly was but a type. Let it then be noted that

1. THE words afford us a description of heaven, as the portion reserved for saints:—it is called *light*: a word that may be understood either literally, to point out the everlasting and unclouded day that obtains in that blessed world—or metaphorically, to signify the perfect joy—glory and bliss possessed there by every inhabitant; for in this way the word *light* is very often used in scripture.

2. THEY shew us how this is acquired; not by their own merit—works—or worth; but by *inheritance*; or the free donation of a father to his

his own children; founded only in his love, and their near relation to himself; a conveyance which constitutes at once the freest, the surest, the most indefeasible, and the most durable title to a full and continual possession.

3. THE heirs are here described to whom this inheritance belongs: it is not for all men, as some new-gospelers pretend: no. As the whole bible is ignorant of that doctrine; so the text expressly confines this title to *saints*; *i. e.* holy persons, or such as are sanctified by the *Holy Ghost*; and so have received holy natures—are carried on in the exercise of holy graces—in a line of holy duties—through a holy course of life and conversation; and thus are found universally holy—and grow therein perseveringly to the end of their days. To these and these only this inheritance belongs—for these it was purchased, to these it was promised—and to these shall it be given.

4. The qualification necessary for these heirs, in order to their entering on the possession of this inheritance, is here ascertained in the words, made meet for it. However good their title may be from the first moment of their justification and adoption, yet they shall never enjoy the kingdom prepared for them, until they are also prepared for it:—that is, every thing contrary to its nature must be taken out of theirs;—dispositions suitable to the enjoyments and employments of that happy state must be found in them:—and these matured to perfection.—Never can they enter into that rest, until every blemish and
imperfection

imperfection is removed:—and not a moment longer shall they be kept out, when once that is done.

5. To this meetness they are wrought by their heavenly *Father*; from whom the right to the inheritance descends to them. They are naturally as unmeet as any others; ^a dead in trespasses and sins; ^b totally depraved, and utterly an unclean thing. ^c Nor can any of them attain this meetness, by doings of his own. ^d It is GOD that must work in them all both to will and to do. ^e It is he that regenerates them by his spirit:—it is he that sanctifies—that edifies—that leads—strengthens—encreases and perfects them, by the same spirit; and when he hath wrought all this work in them and for them, and so they have attained the necessary meetness for this inheritance, every one among them must say, it is by the grace of GOD that I am what I am. ^f and therefore,

6. WHEN they receive it, they are bound and disposed to give thanks forever for it.

THE words thus opened afford us the following

DOCTRINE. All saints shall enter on the inheritance in light, as soon as they are meet for it.

ON

(a) Eph. ii. 3. (b) Col. ii. 13. (c) Isa. lxiv. 6. (d) Eph. ii. 9.
(e) Phil. ii. 13. (f) 2 Cor. xv. 10.

ON this sentiment we wish now to lay hold.
And that it may be of some use, let us

I. CONSIDER the nature of this inheritance;
and

II. ENQUIRE how faints are fitted for it.

I. LET us consider the nature of this inheritance. Scanty and poor, indeed, are the best notions of it that we can form on earth. It is, however, of importance that they be agreeable to the truth, as far as they go: for their influence will be carried through all our religion:—as that consists in preparatives for it—all its parts will be cast into the mould of the heaven we figure to ourselves. Every man's religion is of the same kind with the habitual temper of his heart: and as his heaven means nothing but the completion of his wishes; this will be fabricated in exact correspondence with his religion.

THIS accounts for the fulsome pictures given by the heathen of their ELYSIUM;—a heaven which consisted only in a salubrious clime—and pleasant fields—lawns variegated with the fairest flowers and beautified with an eternal spring: plenteous tables, where ambrosia ever loads the board, and flowing nectar crowns the cup: all heightened by the sweetest music—the gayest mirth—and all the sensual delights of a perpetual festival.

IMAGERY this, drawn only by an heated fancy
—and calculated to the taste of a carnal heart.
Very

Very little different from it, is the paradise of the *Mahometan* mussulman : nothing better can it afford than a group of objects contrived for the gratification of carnal lusts : women and wine—the dance and the song—health and plenty—peace and victory are all the heaven they aim to obtain.

NOR are the ideas of the final bliss, entertained by graceless minds, much better adjusted to the truth ; even by all the light of the gospel that daily shines around them. The miser fancies to himself a place well stocked with heaps of gold—where he may take as much as he will—and be placed beyond the danger of loosing his acquisition :—The ambitious pleases himself with the fiction of stately palaces—gilded roofs—splendid robes—and sumptuous equipage—of distinguished honors—thrones and crowns above the envy of his foes ; while the sensualist is fired with hopes of perpetual appetites, ever satisfied with carnal delights ; but never cloyed in the fruition. And may it not be feared, that many professors satisfy themselves with notions of heaven, that are grovelling and injurious, while they compare it only to bodily objects ?

CERTAIN it is, that, while we remain in these tabernacles, the senses obstruct all refined conceptions, and the fancy abuses us with its gross and dreggy images. Acquainted perfectly with this unhappy state of fallen man, the Father of lights has kindly condescended to set heaven before us in bodily mediums ; and to describe it in figures drawn from things most valued in this world.

world. Hence we find it sometimes set forth as a *house*^a—a father's house with many mansions—a royal palace, where JEHOVAH keeps his court—where stands his throne—and where all his angels are ever in waiting. Sometimes it is depicted as a *city*^b—most regular and beautiful—whose gates are made of the most precious pearls—its foundations jewels—and its streets paved with gold;^c—all harmonious within—free from jars as well as wants and pains—full of light, without sun or moon, stars or candles—the countenance of God and the Lamb supplying and superceding them all; secure too, from all dangers from without; and, therefore, never needing to shut its gates. Sometimes it is exhibited under the appearance of a *feast*;^d—a marriage-supper, where all the saints sit at the table with their LORD, and sup with him and he with them:—where they freely take of all the various fruits of the tree of life^e—and drink full draughts of the river of pleasure flowing from the throne forevermore. And sometimes it is represented as a *kingdom*,^f where all the redeemed are honored as kings—clad in white robes, the apparel of princes—seated on thrones around their Redeemer—and wearing crowns of life and glory, in his court and presence.

WE must not imagine all these delineations to be words without meaning: since they are the dictates of the Spirit of truth. Nor should we suppose

(a) 2 Cor. v. 1. John xiv. 2. (b) Heb. xii. 22. Rev. xxii. 14. (c) Rev. xxi. 18, 23. (d) Rev. xix. 9. (e) Rev. vii. 17. and xxi. 16. and xxii. 1, 17. (f) Luke xiii. 28, 29. Luke xii. 32. and xxii. 29. Rev. iii. 21.

pose them designed to be literally understood; as a real description of that which himself has assured us far exceedeth all that eye hath seen, or ear heard, or heart of man ever has conceived. —No. We have the clearest evidence in scripture, that the inheritance on high is all *spiritual*. Such is the nature of the God to be enjoyed—of the angels that are to be companions—of the souls of the saints themselves—yes, and, as far as may be, of the resurrection-bodies too; spiritual affections are all they exercise—spiritual worship all their service, being without temple or ordinances^b—spiritual views of truth feast their intellect,—and spiritual objects produce their joys.

THE bodily figures of heaven, then, which we find in the bible, must be considered to reveal its glories no otherwise than the Jewish types, of old, did the wonderful realities of CHRIST and his kingdom to which they pointed. They serve as the emblems, or artificial alphabets, by which little children are taught to spell the names of things, before they can form any distinct ideas of the things themselves. And such little children indeed are we all; whilst immured in flesh and blood: as such we speak—as such we think on this subject—it doth not yet appear to us what we shall be. All we see, is through a glass, and darkly.^c The object far exceeds our weak faculties. We have nothing here below, worthy to enter into comparison with it. Who, then, is sufficient to delineate the consummate bliss of the saints in light? Who can trace the spirits of

(a) 1 Cor. xv. 44. (b) Rev. xxi. 22. (c) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

of just men made perfect, into those higher and brighter regions; and justly describe the immortal joys which they possess forever there? This is a subject too big for our apprehensions—and too unwieldy for the tongues of men or angels! The best we can do, in our enquiries about it, is to give ourselves up entirely to the guidance of divine revelation, and be content with what the scripture has declared.

AND in considering their report, it ought to arrest our attention, that in the text, it is represented by LIGHT.

WHETHER that word be understood to signify the idea perceived in our minds from the entrance of parallel and rectilinear rays into our eyes, and their conveyance to the retina; or the motion of fire through the medium of air; or the clarity and brightness of a lucid body itself; whether it be the most subtile fluid matter in the universe—whether it be visible, in itself, or only makes other things so:—whether that is done in a state of rest, or only by its motion—whether that motion be instantaneous or successive, though incomparable in its velocity:—and whether it renders any thing visible by its direct incidence on it—or by its reflection from it:—these all are questions too low for this subject—and we willingly resign them to the discussion of philosophy to whose province they belong. It cannot, however, escape our notice; that there is no creature in the universe more frequently called in to express divine things. Life and joy^a—favour and
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(a) Psalm xcvi. 17. Isaiah lviii. 8.

the manifestation of it--spiritual knowledge ^b--ministers, ^c and the word, ^d used as means of conveying it, eternal life, yea, and God himself ^e are all designed in scripture by the term LIGHT. A term used figuratively to import sometimes that knowledge which is natural and common to sinners; ^f--sometimes to denote that which is spiritual and peculiar to believers in this life, ^g--sometimes that which is the light of glory--the perfect and immediate knowledge of God in CHRIST, which is competent only to saints in heaven. ^h

BUT even in its lowest and literal, or proper sense, it conveys ideas of some qualities affecting to minds as well as bodies; and when we find it used to denote future bliss, we are warranted to believe that whatever may be signified by these qualities, is to be found there. Of these the following may be considered as a specimen:

1. *Light is pure*--incapable of being polluted --it contracts no taint by shining on a dunghill --but purifies the air, through which it passes, from noxious fogs and gross vapours. In this view it may well be applied to express the future inheritance of saints; as that is incorruptible and undefiled--and nothing that defileth can enter into it. ⁱ All the objects it offers for enjoyment are immaculate in purity--all the works appointed for the employment of saints there, are works of holiness. And all that are admitted to them are without spot or wrinkle. ^k

CONFINED

(b) Isa. viii. 20. (c) Matt. v. 14. (d) Psa. cxix. 105. 2 Pet. i. 19.
(e) 1 John i. 5. (f) Luke xi. 34, 36. (g) John i. 9. (h) Joh. viii. 12.
(i) 1 Pet. i. 4. Rev. xxi. 27. (k) Eph. v. 27.

CONFINED to tenements of clay, they all complained of their defilements, and groaned under the felt weight of a body of death:^a but the moment that death delivered them from bodily clogs, and sympathies--and raised them beyond the reach of snares and sorrows from an earthly world; it also set them free from every remain of corruption, from every stain of nature arising from indwelling sin.^b Then did the spirit of God put the finishing hand to the work of sanctification:--then were all inbred corruptions finally slain, and all graces brought up to perfection:--all restraints of the exercise of grace were now removed; and all curbs of its growth taken away.--No sooner has the soul escaped from its prison of clay, than it finds itself freed from every tincture of depravity, and perfectly conformed to the image of God: nothing contrary to the divine nature remains in all its frame. Advanced far above the temptations of satan, and the solicitations of the flesh, which had hitherto confined them among the pots; they now expatiate at large in the land of liberty and perfection--putting on the dove-like wings of silver--and adorned with its feathers of yellow gold, they flee away to the windows of their endless abode.^b No more shall imperfection cleave to their duties--nor sin be inherent in their natures more--no wandering thoughts shall ever spoil their frames--nor risings of heart resist the will of their God! No weariness shall ever make them faint in duty: no pride shall pollute their zeal for God's glory. Now shall they serve him as they would; and love him as perfectly as their

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natures,

(a) Rom. vii. 24. (b) Rev. xiv. 5.

natures can. Willing subjects of JEHOVAH'S kingdom, they rejoice to lie at his sovereign feet, entirely swallowed up in his will--and ever acknowledging him as ALL IN ALL.

2. *Light is glorious in itself*, and discovers every thing that comes under it truly, as it is.

It is, therefore, no improper symbol of that state where GOD shall unveil himself to his servants; and make his secrets known to them that fear him.

THIS is the happy privilege of the saints in light. That the intellectual faculty will be unspeakably enlarged, on their entrance there, we cannot doubt; when it is considered that bodily objects shall no more obstruct its views--nor bodily fancy obtrude its deluding pictures:--that the passions arising from selfish and earthly interests shall never work to prejudice the judgment more; or make them love darkness rather than light: and that the most engaging objects will then be brought near enough, and stript of every disguise.

THEN shall we see face to face:^a then shall we know even as we are known: intuition shall furnish clear and just ideas of every object. The pure in heart shall see GOD.^b--His glorious attributes shall be well understood--his mysterious persons justly apprehended--his works of creation shall be opened to view--the darkest steps of his providence shall all be cleared up: yes, and the whole book of GOD will then be unsealed: the
greatest

(a) 1 Cor. xiii. 12. (b) Matt. v. 8.

greatest difficulties will vanish; and seeming contradictions appear reconciled.--The natures, and dispositions, the offices and history of angels, will be perfectly known--and what is now inexplicable in our own natures, will then be naked to our sight.

THAT this knowledge will be obtained chiefly by intuition, must be evident; when it is granted that all glasses are gone. But, as in this life some axioms and simple ideas are known by intuition; it seems not incongruous that, in the other, some things may be discovered to us by reasoning, since it must be granted that altho' the knowledge obtained in that state is perfect; in respect of the subject; it is neither infinite nor adequate to the object known.--And pure intuition of God, without mixture of reasoning, is, perhaps, peculiar to himself alone. It must however, be supposed that, whatever part of knowledge saints gather from ratiocination, they obtain without the pain of investigation, discussion and suspense. Then shall the glorified soul, with one glance of an eye enlightened by a ray from God himself, pierce incomparably farther into the abyss of nature--the management of Providence, and the mystery of grace, than the most laborious philosopher or acute divine, after their most tedious and painful researches here below.

NOR need we wonder at this; for God himself shall be their prophet:--in his light shall they see light:^a--all things shall be seen in God: and he himself shall be seen through the medium

(a) Psalm xxxvi. 9. Isaiah lviii. 20.

um of his CHRIST.^a This shall ever remain the grand channel of conveyance, for all of GOD that angels or Saints shall ever receive.--As the resurrection-bodies shall be able to see the Redeemer with bodily eyes; so shall the spirits of just men, even before that day, intellectually gaze upon his matchless beauties, without weariness or interruption, as the eagle's eyes do on the beams of the sun.--To them the glories of his mediatorial person, his offices, his sufferings and his work, will be made the constant objects of contemplation.^b

THIS knowledge shall be equally removed from error and from doubts. Its happy subjects shall have no need of the sun--neither of the moon to shine upon them; the glory of the LORD shall illuminate their abode; and the Lamb shall ever be the light of it.^c

O bright and glorious day!--ever clear and serene!--when GOD himself shall be the sun, and nothing to hide him from the view! No cloud shall ever interpose--no melancholy gloom--no shadow of darkness shall ever arise in those blessed regions; for the countenance of GOD in CHRIST,--like the sun in his meridian-splendor, shall smile, shall shine upon them forever!

3. *Light is charming and pleasant.*--It chases away the gloom of hearts and of nature alike--hence it is so frequently, in scripture, used to signify pleasure and joy.

THUS

(a) 2 Cor. iii. 18. (b) 1 John iii. 2. (c) Rev. xxi. 23, and xxii. 5.

THUS considered, it is an emphatical emblem of the inheritance of saints: as that is filled, not only with sweet peace that surpasseth all understanding--but rises to the raptures of eternal joys, unspeakable and full of glory. ^a

FOR this there is a rational foundation laid, in that knowledge we have just now reviewed: for, when we consider the holy natures given to the saints--the holy taste for spiritual and divine beauty infused into them; can we think it possible for them to behold a GOD in CHRIST, and yet not to love him? Can the transcendent excellencies of his nature, thus clearly displayed, be supposed to fail of captivating their whole affections? No. We should do them mighty wrong, if we insinuate that love is not the spring of all their emotions--the law of all they think, and do forever:--their souls seem, as it were, resolved into this principle.--They feel a perfect complacency in all the objects around them.--Every divine perfection, shining on them in JESUS' face, gives unspeakable satisfaction to their minds. In every work of GOD they take cordial delight--But, in the work of man's salvation, they perceive, with the most intense pleasure, all the moral attributes of JEHOVAH mingling their beams and shining with combined lustre--with what raptures do they behold the smiles of their Redeemer; and bask in the beams of that Sun of righteousness!

THE purity, of their love, shall not be tainted with any passion; nor its intensity weakened

(a) 1 John iii. 2.

ened by the intrusion of any rival. Temptation and sin have no place in all the realms of light. Every faculty will expand itself to embrace--every power dilate to cleave to an object, which they all consider as the chiefest among ten thousands and altogether lovely.

Now it is confessed that love is a pleasant affection in its very nature:--when it is thus perfected then, it must afford a pleasure unspeakable indeed; especially when, as in this case, it is attended with the consciousness of being beloved in return. When Saints perceive themselves admitted to as great a nearness, to as intimate communion with their LORD, as they can desire; what tongue can express the streams of celestial pleasure that must then overflow their souls? There is no desire of their hearts that this doth not immediately satisfy: no wants here remain to be supplied--nor any pains to be eased--there are no griefs to be comforted--no sorrows to be allayed here: here is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying--neither any more pain, for GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes! ^a

4. *Light is the most penetrating of all bodies*; it not only shines on, but enters into, and fills up all places where it comes: it passes through solid bodies, and makes them transparent: and even where it is reflected, it turns the object it strikes into its own image.

SUCH is really the nature of the light of heaven. As a diseased body is not healed by presenting

(a) Psalm xvi. 11. and xxxvi. 8. Rev. xxi. 4.

senting the brightest objects to its sight; so meer gazing on all the glory of heaven could never give felicity to a soul sick and loathsome with the leprosy of sin.--To effect this, assimilation is not less necessary than vision: to partake this glory, is as needful as to behold it. The saint in light, therefore, finds not himself enclosed in a surrounding glory only, at which he is permitted to gaze, at a distance; but elevated and adapted to it by a vital, corresponding principle within.

THE glory, surrounding him on all sides, penetrates into the inmost recesses of his nature--shines through the whole man--and fills every faculty and every sense as full as it can hold. While he beholds, he is transformed into the image of what he sees. This image is vital.--Not as the resemblance of a lifeless statue to a man: it is a participation of the life of God. Nor is it a superficial likeness, as the shining of the face of Moses, or paintings laid on canvas.--It is an inward thorough transformation; in which the creature is, at once, filled full of God; yea, swallowed up and lost in him; as a vessel filled with the water of the ocean, in which it swims. No wonder, then, that the calm, steady, constant beholding of this glory should ravish the saints in light. --It is the divine glory naked--near--and present.--Shining in a manifestation, to purchase which CHRIST bled and died--and which was the object of all God's counsels and acts, from eternity.--It is the glory of those perfections which are God's own blessedness:--in the beholding of which he himself, is satisfied forever. With what unspeakable

ble raptures then, must the faint behold the eternal wisdom, kindly opening all its councils, and unfolding all its plans ;--Divine power discovering what it has done, and what it can yet do ;--Infinite love unveiling itself--smiling, and open faced ;--conducting him along the line of its transactions ; helping to trace the rivulets to the fountain--and the sweet beams to the sun, from which they were emitted--the acts of love to the principle--to that heart, where rolled, from eternity all the thoughts of tenderness to man, which time brought forth to effect ! --how ravishing, there to see what it was that clothed DEITY with flesh, and led him to groan and expire on the accursed tree ! But what shall be the thoughts of the soul, that finds all these perfections made over to it, and become its own ? Assured of an unfailing interest in his love, the faint relishes all that is in him as his own bliss : --enjoys and possesses it all as his own portion : and knows that it is his security that this portion shall be his forever, rests on the same basis, with the throne of the ETERNAL.

5. *Light animates and excites to action* : men work while it is day ; darkness suspends the labors of life.

So, when departed faints begin to walk in the light of heaven, their endless day is but the measure of endless activity. True, the spirits of believers, at death, are said to have entered into rest. But that does not intend to insinuate that their souls, are then laid into a deep sleep--or ceased from consciousness and active exertion : no, they only rest from their *labors*--labors that gave

gave pain--weariness--or grief--With respect to vitality and all its exercises, the souls born into the world of glory, may be said only then to begin to live. Then do they spring to action with a vigor and alacrity hitherto unknown. The principle of life implanted in regeneration, which had heretofore been called to war against their own corruptions, and to conflict with all its other enemies--now, freed from their thrall, and having obtained a triumph in their death--is arrived at maturity, and capable of moving in this exalted sphere. The SPIRIT of CHRIST, as the spirit of glory, now, more fully than ever, dwelling in them--becomes a principle of eternal life and action to them; and is as a soul to the souls in light. Hence they rest not, day nor night from the vigorous and perfect exercises that become their circumstances. These however must be such as are consistent with the rest and happiness of spirits already arrived at their centre; yet sensible of their being infinitely below the perfection of the lovely patterns set before them, of spirits thoroughly convinced that, as they owe their all to sovereign grace; so, when they shall have eternally been offering up themselves, and all the powers they have, in every act of obedience they can pay, to that God who is their all in all--they still shall remain infinitely his debtors to all eternity.

THIS sentiment may lead us to some faint ideas of their exercises. Love to their happiness will make them unwearied, in every suitable exertion for acquiring more and more of that infinite good in which it lies--hence, while every communication enlarges the faculties which it fills--de-

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light

light in it excites them to stretch themselves and all their powers both to improve and to acknowledge what is received. As they exercise, they grow: and thus they continue rising higher and higher, in every heavenly quality—and every heavenly joy, forever.

THE more of the glory of God they see—they are sensible the more, of his being worthy of infinitely higher honors than they, and all creatures, can ever pay: the larger share they have partaken in the gifts of his love, the higher will their obligations to gratitude rise, and the deeper will be their sense of them. This is a feeling that naturally labors for vent: it cannot rest without expressing itself. Conscious they have nothing of their own, with which to repay all these favours, they cannot avoid bursting out in thank-offerings and praise.

CONTEMPLATION therefore, will not be all the employ of these happy spirits. Praise, adoration, and thanks, will ever be their delightful business too. Hark their strains. Worthy is the "LAMB that was slain to receive honor and glory and blessing! &c. Therefore blessing and glory and honor and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the LAMB forever and ever!" Thus will each saint be incessantly engaged in celebrating all the perfections he beholds—and all the mighty works of God he knows. But love and gratitude, thus perfect, will be impatient of a lonely soliloquy of praise—they will long to excite all other capable beings, to join with them in this sweet employ.

AND

AND it will be no inconsiderable part of the blifs of every faint in light; that he finds himself stationed in the midst of a society, equally with himself disposed to so holy a concert. His happy lot is cast among the spirits of just men made perfect—in the general assembly and church of the first born: in each of whom he can perceive his LORD's image perfected. That perfection and the honor annexed to it, will be an additional ingredient in his happiness. There no envy, or selfishness shall excite discord—no different opinions—no party-passions—no separate interests, no old offences shall ever divide the saints in light—each shall heartily embrace all the rest. The sweetest harmony shall universally prevail among them: and their only emulation shall be, who shall excel in love and in praise.

THIS may assure us that these happy spirits shall mutually know, and be known, by all their companions in blifs. In the visions both of Daniel and John, the holy angels appear to know each other very intimately; and concerning saints, our LORD himself affirms that they are equal to the angels of GOD. Unreasonable then is the suspicion that the spirit made perfect should lack any of the advantages which it enjoyed, in its imperfect state: and among these, proper acquaintance and converse with fellow-men was not the least. But there is, in scripture, enough to assure us that the saints in light, lack not this privilege—how else could Abraham know Lazarus and his whole story? Or Moses and Elias be at once known to the disciples at Tabor? or Adam discover his Eve when
first

first seen,* or the Thessalonian converts be the apostle's joy at the last day? Without knowledge of each other too, it is hard to say how they could maintain concert in their thanksgivings—or communion in each other's improvements or bliss.

It cannot, however, be supposed that they are known by their former features—or any old marks of their rank and distinction on earth. Their converse will doubtless be most intimate and free; but without all earthly affections—or a wish for the revival of earthly connections. All former distinctions of sex, of birth, of relation, have ceased forever; all are swallowed up in their common relation to GOD and CHRIST, and in his image seen upon them all.

BUT how their converse is carried on, has been a question much in the dark.—Following, with excessive servility, the speculations of *Aristotle* and *Plato*, *Origen*, and most of the ancient divines, supposed all created spirits to be necessarily united to some material vehicle—and contended that it was the prerogative of GOD alone to exist entirely separate from all body. These vehicles they distinguished into AERIAL and ETHERIAL, or igneous—both of various degrees of purity according to the genius and temper of the spirits that inhabited them. This they called the soul's chariot—which, being lodged at the place of the origin of the nerves in the brain, was supposed its immediate residence—and the organ of all its perceptions and actions; this being all sensory in every point, was capable of receiving impressions of every kind

(a) Mat. xvii. 4. Luke xvi. 25. Gen. ii. 23. 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

kind—from every sensible object, in every part of its substance ; and therefore, although, during its imprisonment in the body, it can see only by the optic, hear only by the acoustic nerves, &c. yet, whenever it is liberated from this dungeon, it is all eye, all ear ; flying at large ; and open, in every part, to notices of all the objects around it.

WHEN death dislodges human souls from their earthly tabernacles, it was imagined that they carry off these vehicles with them : this they supposed to be the *clothing*, and the *house which is from heaven*, which Paul, in 1. Cor. v. 1, longed to put on. Over it, they taught that the soul had power, so far as to contract, to condense—or to rarify and expand it at pleasure—yes, to alter its form and direct its motions—just as it will—and this was the means by which they believed departed spirits could know or converse with each other above ; or utter sounds in the everlasting songs of heaven.

I do not now undertake to disprove this theory ; although I think it will be no easy task for its friends to confirm it by scripture—yet, whatever become of the hypothesis, I cannot give up the fact. For, do we see the inferior animal tribes, of earth and air, endowed with power to express their meanings ? Have men on earth ability to converse, not only face to face, but even with a friend at the distance of thousands of leagues ? And shall we yet dream that spirits made perfect, enjoy less of these advantages ? advantages without which they can have no society—no union—no harmony ? Is it not clear from
Rev.

Rev. vii. 9—12, and Heb. xii. 23, that they assemble for joint worship? Does not this imply joint consent? That prove full apprehension of their mutual sentiments?—and this infer mutual communication between them?

But, as to the mode, whether with, or without vehicles—voices—and sounds, we must be content to remain much in the dark while here. It is true, without the supposition of vehicles, it cannot be supposed that, before the resurrection, these bodiless beings should use words or articulate sounds. Yet, may it not be possible that, as we, even while in the body, often converse with ourselves or even with God, without the use of its organs; by calling up into act thoughts and graces which before lay hid, in the common habit; so may saints in light, by a simple act of the will, immediately present to other's views naked and full, whatever each would have them to know? May they not, as so many living mirrors, reflect the images of all they perceive on whatever object they turn themselves to—just as a man may, at his pleasure, turn his back to one, and shew his face to another, and at the same time see it himself, in a glass, when it is presented before it?

THE perfections and bliss of each saint glorify their great Author in proportion to their degrees—and increase the bliss of all the rest, in that proportion; even as the largest candle sheds the greatest light and heat through all the room where it is set. This can never be, but by making them conspicuous to all the rest; and so attracting the love—exciting the joy—and animating

mating the song of the whole choir. Thus he that shines brightest may be said to sing loudest, in this speechless anthem. Hence it is, at once, the interest and the duty of each saint, to publish all he is—and knows—and thinks; not to a select companion only, but to all within his sphere.—So shall they be made each other's mutual blifs. They have nothing in them which they are afraid to divulge—and therefore no secrets to keep: with the sweetest freedom does each converse with all his companions—each thought, in each breast, being darted through those of all the rest, in the instant of its conception; not as words uttered here below—which convey only some of our ideas, and these only to some persons near us—and at some particular times, and then cease—but as a printed sheet communicates all it contains—to all who view it—and that at all times—imparting as much meaning to day to you, as if it had said nothing yesterday to me.

THUS may we form some obscure conceptions of their constant exercise in the praises of God and the LAMB. But we must not imagine that this excludes every other exertion. Are all the angels ministring spirits to saints on earth? And is it true that saints in light live like angels? Then, why may it not be supposed, that their God may, sometimes, honor these benevolent spirits, with some beneficent errands to his faithful subjects here? Nor could this be any interruption to their beatific vision:—God is omnipresent. These excursions, then, could not remove them from him, any more than they do angels: who, we are sure, are ever behold-
ing

ing the face of our Father in heaven, even while employed in embassies through all the earth. Why should it be thought impossible, that saints shall often be engaged in travelling through space—surveying and admiring all the works of God? It is true, the affairs of this sinful world are not *particularly* subjected to their cognizance; as they contain so many things which it would be irksome to them to behold. Yet it is certain they learn the state of the church, *in general*, as well as the condition of unstained worlds—sometimes by intuition; when they themselves are sent, in swift flights, to visit them: sometimes by revelation from God, in whom they see all things; and sometimes by the report of angels, returning at set seasons, from their posts, to give in their accounts and to receive new charges.

FROM all this it is not to be doubted that the spirits freed from these bodies shall have many new senses and faculties; of which, in this life, we can form no more conception, than the fœtus in the womb could of the manner, in which it was to live as soon as born. But, as all faculties increase by exercise; it is rational to suppose that all the powers of spirits made perfect shall be perpetually opening, enlarging and strengthening in the worlds of light. There will be *new* glories to be seen in God to all eternity: The more of these they see the more shall they love—the more shall they enjoy—and be the more conformed to the good enjoyed, for ever. Thus the wine in our Father's kingdom is ever *new*—and *new* songs shall celebrate the Giver's praise to endless ages.

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It is not indeed to be imagined that all saints shall share these felicities and honors in an equal degree. Every vessel shall be full in the ocean of bliss.—But some will be able to contain a greater quantity than others. In dispensing these degrees of glory, God, as is fit, shall exercise his own sovereign good pleasure.—Yet, in general, it is to be concluded, that they will be proportioned to the measure of grace exercised—of service done—and sufferings borne for God here on earth. Thus the greatest grace gives a moral congruity, or qualification, for the greatest glory. And hence, tho' the bliss of the least is perfect, and his glory complete; yet shall one saint in light rise above another; even as one star differeth from another star in glory.

CONCERNING the share that saints shall have in the resurrection, and in the process of the last judgment, I have spoken elsewhere; and shall not detain you on these things here.—But it cannot be omitted, on this subject, that the consequences of that event shall form a most important addition to their glory and bliss.—The recovery of their long-wished bodies, from their long confinement in the darksome grave--and the beauties which shall adorn them. Vital union to bodies now refined into a degree of spirituality--and purged from all gross elements, bodies freed from all corruption and gravity--and from all use of food or apparel--and framed for immortality--bodies now pure--impassible, and agile as lightning---beautifully formed to a likeness of the body of the SAVIOUR himself: each shining as the sun in the brightness of the

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firmament

firmament--in the full possession of an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory!

THIS must needs open new scenes of action--and new avenues of fruition to them all.

WAS it a joy unspeakable, when, at death, the souls of saints found themselves freed from earthly clogs--from snares and sins--snatched up into the arms of angels, and carried by them thro' the air,* that roam of devils; defended on every side by radiant files of heavenly warriors, appointed to keep off the fiery darts of the wicked; guardians who not only clear the passages, but sweetly converse with and lovingly entertain

* This is not intended to insinuate that the departed spirit is under a necessity of spending a long time in its ascent from a death-bed to the third heavens. God is every where present. The spiritual world is hid from our view, only by the partition-wall of this body. Break down that wall; and we are plunged immediately into the naked sight of its great realities: and are passed through the dark valley of death as soon as we are dead. This must be the case, if departed souls are naked spirits without any connexion with matter. But if we should contend for their still carrying with them material vehicles, which fill place and use loco-motion as bodies do, it will be otherwise; yet, even so, we need not be troubled with the gross notions of souls tarrying about the graves of their dead bodies--or wandering for ages, in regions of air, before they reach ætherial worlds.--We do not find, even in the body, that it requires a long time for our eyes to reach the sun. The eyes of STEPHEN were not long in penetrating even to heaven, and the throne of CHRIST. Why, then, may it not be supposed that angels that glide through space as quick as lightning--or flames of fire; shall waft up the departed souls of saints to the *Empyreum* itself, as quickly as motion can be made? This will not leave time for a long abode in the region of the powers of the air: a region which, to a soul that, without a body, cannot see the sun, and has not yet arrived within sight of the light of heaven--may well be called a vale of darkness; a vale which lies within the circuit where devils range;--in which, therefore, passengers, if not defended by a convoy, would be exposed to the most furious attacks of enemies that know all their opportunities of hurting it are now expiring--and hence this valley of death may be a valley of frights and conflicts, as well as of darkness. But with all this, naked spirits have nothing to do: and that departed saints are such, appears from Eccles. xii. 7. where no other parts are found but that body which returns to the earth as it was; and the spirit which returns immediately to God that gave it.

entertain their ward by the way, until they have ushered it into the third heavens ; where stands the throne of the *Redeemer*, and where himself resides ? Was it all extasy to find the blest inhabitants there waiting, at the gates of the celestial palace, *eager* to embrace and welcome their new companions ? To be escorted by hosts of perfect saints, that strike up new songs on the occasion ? To be presented, by its convoy, to JESUS CHRIST ? Kindly received into his arms—and, by himself, fixed in its mansion, in his own house ?

WHAT heart, then, can conceive—or what tongue express the raptures—the extasies that must ensue, when they shall, after the judgment is over, ascend with their LORD, and by him be presented to the FATHER—joyfully accepted there—enthroned in glory, and crowned with light ?

BUT to speak particularly of these things—to describe the glory and unfading splendor of that incorruptible Diadem, with which their LORD shall then adorn their exalted heads—& the various sweets and innumerable beauties of the new Jerusalem.—This is a task which I dare not presume to attempt. For so should I be lost in that great abyss, which is not to be fathomed by the shallow faculties of mortal men.

INSTEAD of this, let us rather join in the felicitations dictated by an heart pleased with that bliss, saying “Hail, blessed spirits ! you have run
“ the laborious race ; and now you have receiv-
“ ed the golden prize. You have fought with
mighty

" mighty enemies ; and now you enjoy the vic-
 " tor's crown ! No more shall you complain of
 " darkness mixed with your light. No more
 " shall you groan under the perplexity of thought
 " —the tumults of passion, or the burden of
 " indwelling iniquity : No more shall you cry
 " out because of oppressing enemies or sorrows :
 " Your Redeemer's love hath freed you from
 " them all—hath carried you, unhurt, through
 " all your dangers, and hath now forever fixed
 " you in his arms ! Now are you ravished with
 " the displays of his matchless beauty. No
 " wonder then that it is your delight to contem-
 " plate his perfections without ceasing—and to
 " join your notes with the angelic choir in sing-
 " ing praises and hallelujahs, blessing and glo-
 " ry, and honor and power, to Him that sitteth
 " on the throne, and to the LAMB forever and
 " ever ! " Sing on ! sing on, ye happy ones ;
 until the time come when we also, through the
 same Sovereign grace, shall be made meet to
 join with you ! O blessed day ! When ? How
 long e'er it arrive, and waft us up to yonder
 home ?

BUT this naturally brings me in the

II. *Place to enquire how men are made meet
for all this.*

THAT this inheritance was eternally designed
 and prepared for its appointed heirs, was remark-
 ed in the preface : Our divine Redeemer has
 taught us, that it will be in this view that he
 himself shall consider it at the last day ; when
 he shall adjudge them the possession of it, Mat.

xxv. 34. For them indeed it was bought with the invaluable price of his own blood. These were the *sheep* for whom he laid down his precious life:^a the *peculiar people* for whom he died, to redeem from all iniquity^b—the *church* which he loved, and for which he gave himself; that he might present it to GOD without spot, or blemish, or any such thing.^c The modern tenet of *universal redemption* has as little foundation in scripture, as its natural offspring the notion of *universal salvation*. Indeed, without the latter, the former is more absurd even than it.

WITH the sacred writers nothing is more peremptorily laid down as an axiom, than this, that, if GOD so loved any man as not to spare his own Son, but deliver him up as a sacrifice in his stead; it is impossible that this love should not, with him also, freely give him all things.^d If CHRIST is once pleased to lay down his life for any lost sheep, the inspired oracles suppose it impossible for that favourite to perish, or for any enemy ever to pluck it from the Redeemer's hand:^e nor could they admit that the Judge of all the earth, who ever will do right, will exact the sinner's debt over again at his hand, after his Surety had paid it for him.^f Hence while they uniformly consider the heaven of saints as a *purchased possession*^g—and themselves as bought with a price, no less precious than the blood of CHRIST,^h as of a lamb without spot and without blemish;ⁱ—they, with one voice, declare that these happy ones are not the whole race of Adam;

(a) John x. 15. (b) Tit. ii. 14. (c) Eph. v. 26, 27. (d) Rom. viii. 38. (e) John x. 28, 29. (f) Gen. xviii. 25. (g) Eph. i. 14. (h) 1 Cor. vi. 20. vii. 23. (i) 1 Pet. i. 19.

Adam; but only the children of GOD scattered abroad through the world,^d a people redeemed, unto GOD from among men; out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.^e

FOR them the great Purchaser has taken possession^f—and holds the premises, in his own hands, in their behalf; until he receive themselves home, and fix each of them in the mansion allotted to him in their Father's house—a mansion which he has bequeathed to him, by name, in that last will and testament, which he sealed with his blood.^g

THIS bequest has founded, to each of them, a valid title to the inheritance: its validity was judicially recognized by GOD the FATHER; on that day when, they, being found vitally and fœderally united to CHRIST by faith, had his surety-righteousness imputed to them; and, on its account, were justified by his Father's sentence.^h This title can never receive any improvements. It is as good and perfect the first moment as the last—at the very instant of conversion; as at the day of judgment—of all that is done afterwards, either in the believer, or by him, no part is intended to give him a better claim to future bliss.—No. The right of a child to his inheritance, is as clear at the hour of his birth; as when he arrives at maturity; although he is not qualified to enjoy and possess it, until he has received an education that shall fit him to move

(d) John xi. 52. (e) Rev. v. 9. and xiv. 4. (f) Heb. vi. 20.
 (g) John xiv. 2, 3. Luke xxii. 29. Mat. xxvi. 28. Heb. xiii. 20.
 (h) Mat. v. 20. Isa. lxiv. 6. Rom. x. 4. and iv. 5, 6, 9, 22.
 Jer. xxiii. 6. Isa. xlv. 24. and liv. 17. Rom. v. 19, 18.

move with decorum in the sphere designed for him.

Just so it is with the heirs of glory. Whatever has been done to secure their title to it; while they continue in a state of nature, they are utterly unfit to possess it. As children of a fallen Adam, they are children of wrath even as others.^a--As the branches of a dead tree, they, too, are dead in trespasses and sins.

WHAT has been said about the nature of this blessed inheritance may convince us, that such natures are no less incapable of enjoying it, than are the natures of reprobates themselves. All enjoyment supposes a congruity of the object to the faculty that perceives it. Pure joys, therefore, are competent only to pure hearts.--Such only can see God.^b--None but these could breathe the air of the blest serene on high.^c--The inheritance itself is undefiled:--and therefore nothing that defiles can enter on it.^d.

HENCE, before any of the heirs is admitted to the possession, he must be made *meet* for it. This is not to be expected as the effect merely of his own exertions.^e--Unless we may hope that darkness may work itself to light;--or that the exercises of enmity will change it into love. The text assures us, that all that fits us is the work, not of man, nor means, but only of God. The FATHER hath made us meet, not only

(a) Eph ii. 3. (b) Mat. v. 6. (c) Heb. xii. 14. (d) 1 Pet. i. 4. Rev. xxi. 27. (e) Eph. ii. 9. 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. ii. 13.

N. B. The reader is earnestly requested to examine the several texts cited in this discourse, and then to judge whether they prove its doctrines.

only as he chose us to this bliss--and gave his dear Son to buy it for us :--but, chiefly, as he sent his Spirit down into our hearts, there to work the whole good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.^a

By the energetic influences of this divine Spirit is the whole work effected in us ; that has any part in our meetness for this inheritance :--- He is the sole agent in that business.

It is worthy of notice here, that the persons of whom the Apostle speaks as thus *made meet* for heaven ; were yet in this present life. And nothing is more plainly declared in scripture than this ; that all that is to be done, in order to fit any soul for heaven, must be done here below--this is the only accepted time and day of salvation^b : in that night of death, wherein none can work, there is no repentance to be obtained.^c--As the tree falls, so it must lie^d--and he that dies filthy, must be filthy still^e--The dream, of conversions wrought in hell, never turned the head of any professor of christianity ; until the spirit of that religion was exchanged for the strong delusions of the spirit of antichrist.^f

THE ingredients, which constitute this meetness, may be gathered from the nature of the enjoyment for which it prepares.

1. WE have seen that to be a state of LIFE.—To fit us for it, then, it is necessary that we be regenerated.—for it is in that act of sovereign and

(a) 2 Theff. i. 11. 2 Cor. v. 5. (b) 2 Cor. vi. 2. (c) Joh. ix. 4. Eccl. ix. 10. (d) Eccl. xi. 3. (e) Rev. xxii. 11. (f) 2 Theff. ii. 11.

and Almighty grace, that we are brought from spiritual death—that the whole nature is changed, and the principle of life infused into us.

THIS is, therefore, the first effectual step, taken by the SPIRIT of GOD, to fit us for this inheritance.—All the heirs are first made children of GOD by regeneration.--They are born of GOD :^a--made new creatures: an entire change is wrought on their hearts, in the day of GOD's power.^b--This begins a new life in them, that can never be lost; but, like the morning light, will grow more and more unto the perfect day.^c

2. THE text describes the future bliss as a state of LIGHT. It follows, then, that, in order to a meetness for that enjoyment, we must have eyes to see it. Spiritual glory can not be seen with eyes of flesh.--Spiritual sight alone can perceive it.^d Blind, as every man naturally is, to the beauty of all divine things--none can enter the realms of light; until first he has been delivered from the power of darkness.^e--By the illuminating virtue of the spirit of God, his eyes must be opened--the scales of ignorance made to fall from them--and divine day poured on his understanding.

THEREFORE is this work ever done in the saints that are to be ripened for glory. They are turned from darkness to marvellous light.^f They all be hold as in a glass, the glory of GOD.^g They have seen the deformity of sin--their own

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natural

(a) John i. 13. (b) 2 Cor. v. 17. Psa. cx. 3. (c) Prov. iv. 18.
(d) Mat. xvi. 17. (e) Col. i. 13. (f) 1 Pet. ii. 9. (g) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

natural guilt, and depravity--the purity and perfection of GOD's law--and the justice of the damnation of every rebel that has broken it: The forlorn condition of themselves, and all the fallen race; and their utter inability to help themselves out of that woful state, are realities of which all are made sensible.^a By this light they have seen the glorious plan of salvation reported in the gospel:--the perfection of the characters--offices--and works of CHRIST the Saviour--and the divine beauty of all the moral perfections of JEHOVAH, as manifested there. In GOD's light, they see light, and walk as children of it,--enduring therein, to the end, as seeing him who is invisible.^b

3. HOLINESS is the very essence of heaven. To fit us for it, then, it is necessary we be made holy too.--Without this we cannot see it.^c For this end GOD has given us a holy law--an holy Gospel--holy Sabbaths--holy ordinances--holy examples--and cast up, and hedged in, for us a holy way.^d But, because all this would be ineffectual without holy hearts too; therefore the SPIRIT of CHRIST, having implanted in us, in regeneration, a holy principle,--goes on to cherish and cultivate it in a gradual, progressive and persevering work of sanctification. For this end he operates by the means of word, ordinances and providences, in carrying on this work; until every corruption of nature is mortified--every inbred lust finally slain--and all the graces of the divine life grown up to maturity.^e

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(a) Rom. vii. 7.--11, 14. (b) Psa. xxxvi. 9. Heb. xi. 27. (c) Heb. xii. 14. (d) Isa. xxxv. 8. (e) Eph. iv. 13.

4. DOES the state of which we speak contain near, open immediate *communion* with GOD in CHRIST? Then, surely, for such rebels as we to be fitted for it, supposes that we have been, in the first place, reconciled.^a Can two walk together except they be agreed?^b Unless, by a true and genuine repentance, we have been brought to lay down the weapons of our warfare—to desert the camp of God's enemy, and submit as willing subjects at his feet:^c unless we, by faith, have fled for refuge to the hope set before us---receiving CHRIST, in all his offices, as our own Saviour--and giving our whole selves away to him^d---unless we have thus been vitally ingrafted in and united to Christ---and so, cordially reconciled to GOD through him--we can never know what this communion means.^e This faith, and that repentance, then, never fail to be wrought by the spirit, in them that are to be brought to this inheritance.^f And, from the day in which these graces are first brought into action, the heir of glory is trained up for a life of *immediate* communion with GOD hereafter; by a life of *mediate* communion with him here.^g Their father's countenance smiles on them and they perceive it: he lets in a ray of his own moral perfections on their souls, and they are moulded into its likeness; as the wax to that of the seal: he impresses his love, and they receive it with joy: they hunger, and he feeds them, with the hidden manna: they lean on him, and he supports them: they pour out their hearts and complaints before him, and he hears, yea, answers,

(a) Col. i. 21. 2 Cor. v. 28. (b) Amos iii. 3. (c) Luke xiii. 3.
 (d) John i. 12. (e) John xv. 5. (f) 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Peter
 i. 2. (g) 1 John i. 3.

answers, in favors beyond their highest thoughts: and thus by mutual action and re-action is communion maintained on earth between every child of GOD, and their Father who is in heaven.

5. Is the rest remaining, a state of COMPLACENCY AND DELIGHT? And can this ever be found, where the object of it is not beloved? Truly, until the love of GOD is shed abroad in our hearts, we shall be utterly indisposed for delighting in him.^a Hence, if any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, not a blessing, but a curse lies at his door.^b How could he live in the world of love? Hence, too, the Holy Spirit, to every heir of glory, imparts a disposition to love the LORD, with all his heart.

THEY all are brought to fix their strongest affections on the lovely IMMANUEL. They behold his glory—and their hearts are attracted, and won, by the beauty they see in him—they cleave to him as their beloved and friend. In their eyes he is altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousands^c—yea, they consider him as their all^d—and, whom have I in heaven but thee? or what on earth do I desire besides thee? is the language of each of their souls.^e This love is the spring of all their action—the principle of all their obedience—by this they are led to love all that resembles, and all that belongs to him. By this they are stimulated to hate sin, that opposed and crucified him; and to wage a constant war against it.^f This makes his word and ordinances

(a) Rom. v. 5. (b) 1 Cor. xvi. 22. (c) 1 Pet. ii. 7. Cant. v. 10.
(d) Col. iii. 11. (e) Ps. lxxiii. 25. (f) Ps. xcvi. 10.

dinances precious to them—his Sabbaths their festivals--his name as ointment poured forth and his saints esteemed the excellent of the earth :^g and, as this temper will grieve at whatever would dishonor his name, or hurt his cause; so will it lead to aim, with a single eye, at his glory; in whatever is suffered or done by it.^h

6. IN a word, the very idea of that state, as a state of joy, supposes, that a taste suited to it is necessary to fit us for it: without a relish for what we possess, what joy can be felt in the possession?

To impart this to the heirs of this inheritance was the very business of the SPIRIT, in regeneration; and to encrease it, was the tendency of all his other work within them. For this end does he bring a portion of heaven down to their taste at times—thereby he gives them an earnest of the inheritance to come.ⁱ—Thus does he wean their hearts from all below, and make them long for their house not made with hands.^k They thirst for God, the living God—their souls follow hard after him—their heart and flesh cry out for liberty to stretch their wings and fly away to his presence and his bosom.^l—Yea, for this cause, do they rejoice in him when the fig-tree does not blossom, and even glory in tribulations—long to be dissolved—and desire to depart and be with CHRIST, as a thing far better, than all created good.^m—This makes them meet death as their friend—put off their earthly tabernacle with

(g) Cant. i. 3. Ps. xvi. 3. (h) Ps. cxix. 136. 1 Cor. x. 31. (i) 2. Cor. i. 22. (k) 2. Cor. v. 2. (l) Ps. lxxxiv. 2. Hab. iii. 17, 18. (m) Phil. i. 23.

with joy—sing in dissolution, and triumph over the grave.

7. FINALLY, as the heavenly state is all PERFECTION, nothing imperfect can enter on it. The faint in his infirmities—with all his body of death about him, cannot be admitted to that bliss any more than the unregenerate. That which is perfect must be come; and that which is in part be done away.^a 'Tis true, this perfection is never attained here below; and therefore the faint is called every day to grow in grace. But the SPIRIT of GOD, that dwells within them, is gradually carrying them on towards that mark, at which they all aim: and short of which they cannot rest.^b For this he deals out to them comforts and sorrows--prosperity and afflictions^c--word and ordinances: that, by all means, they may be more and more advanced in the divine life:--until the building is reared, and needs only the cope-stone to be set on it, to open the way for the eternal song of grace unto it.^d--- And then he puts to it that finishing hand, which, in the article of death, touches the work up to the measure of the stature of the perfect man in CHRIST JESUS: and instantly lands the faint on glory's blissful shore.

AND thus our way is paved for some

A P P L I C A T I O N.

DID time permit, we might soon find that, as no theme is better fraught with comforts for the

(a) Cor. xiii. 10. (b) Phil. iii. 14. (c) 2 Tim. iii. 17. (d) Phil. i. 6.

the faint;—so none affords more serious matter for trial of our state.

Does it not naturally lead us to reflect

1. How glorious the prospects which religion has opened? 2. How boundless the divine love that provided all these joys? 3. How freely they are bestowed;—even as an *inheritance*? 4. How sure the title of every adopted child of God to all the glory that shall be revealed? and 5. how ardently should he long for the enjoyment of it?

LET us all, then, examine what share of meetness for this portion have we received? Let us go over the several articles of the second head; and turn them into queries, addressed to our own hearts, and

IF we find this work going on, let us be animated to pray and strive and labor for perfection: and be comforted in the prospect that we shall surely attain it at the last; and that in the course of a little time.

BUT, if it appears evident, on the whole, that our preparation is not yet begun--let us awake—consider—cry earnestly to God for the gift of the HOLY GHOST, and never rest till we know that we have believed: for, blessed be God, he has not yet quitted the sanctifying work--his grace is still free:--and CHRIST is still offered, as his gift, to all that will: the chief of sinners is still invited--called--commanded to accept that gift and live. CHRIST ever liveth
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to make intercession--the residue of the spirit is with him--he can easily turn hearts of stone to flesh, and out of the most stubborn sinners, form for himself a willing people in the day of his power. The Great Redeemer can save to the uttermost:--the benevolence and pity of his heart are infinite; and him that cometh to him for life, he will in no wise cast out.

To whom else should we go? He has the words of eternal life. To him, then, let us all speedily take our flight, and lay hold of the hope set before us; for, behold, death is fast approaching! The Judge is at the door! Behold, now is the accepted time--behold, now is the day of salvation!

BUT, here the time reminds me of the occasion of my addressing you on this subject to day.

IF the first head of this discourse has succeeded, in any measure, in its design of giving you a glimpse of the glory of saints in light; it will help you to some idea of that state, into which, we may humbly trust, an entrance was administered abundantly, a few days ago, to an excellent man; who, for more than forty-one years, walked with eminent usefulness before this church, in the important character of a RULING ELDER.

AND, so far as I may be warranted to judge, from my own knowledge and the concurring information of his brethren and cotemporaries, the last head was but a sketch of some of the out-lines of that religion; by which the *Spirit* of
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of God has, for many years, been making him meet for that blessed *inheritance*.

THE repeated attacks of an acute disease which have, so lately, brought me apparently to the brink of the grave, have left me, at present, under a peculiar incapacity for the labor of composition; and make me to regret that the draught of a character for my venerable friend had not fallen to the lot of some hand more competent to that task.

UNABLE, however, to put a negative on the request of so many of his friends and brethren as have solicited it; I have ventured to undertake that interesting subject at this my first appearance in this sacred place, after my confinement.

SECURE of that candor which I have so long experienced in this generous audience, I proceed, regardless of the rules of art: confident that, with you at least, my known circumstances will be my apology for every defect of composition and style; while it is my honest aim to lay before you the truth of facts in its naked simplicity.*

IN the discharge of this duty, I cannot pretend to equal advantages with those who have had the privilege of living near the deceased for a long course of years; for that enjoyment I was

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* THE same plea must be my excuse to every candid reader for any inaccuracies, with which this discourse comes from the press: it was very hastily written, in a very languid state, without any expectation of its being printed: and the copy being now called for at a time when I am unable to transcribe it, I am obliged to send it to the press in the rough draught.

as one born out of due time. Very little of his character can be expected from my own knowledge ; as he had long retired from business and was far advanced into the vale of old age, before that began. But he has left a witness in the breasts of a very numerous acquaintance ; and from the lips of some unexceptionable characters among them, I have drawn the informations that follow : in the rehearsal of which I have never exceeded the testimonies furnished me ; but designedly fallen much within their limits ; that every acquaintance of his, in this assembly, may be able to go away declaring that his own knowledge of the deceased, greatly transcends all I have said.

Mr. RALPH CROSS was born at *Ipswich*, in this county, of honest and industrious parents, on the 14th. of AUGUST 1706. He was early put apprentice to a reputable ship-builder in this town ; with whom he learnt that business, which he afterwards prosecuted for so long a course of years, with so much ability and success.

At the expiration of the term of his apprenticeship, he returned to the place of his nativity, and there he was received a member of the church, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. ROGERS, in the year 1727. In the course of the year following, he settled in this town, in the business of his occupation, and entered into the matrimonial relation with Mrs. SARAH JOHNSON, the daughter of his former master. This event he always considered as one of the most favourable providences of his whole life. In the lady of his choice he found an help-meet for

for him in the highest sense. Peculiarly formed for the business of her station, she possessed a degree of knowledge in the management of her affairs, which few of her sex have exceeded : her life was a continued series of active exertions in every line of duty proper to a female ; it was hard to say whether unwearied industry or frugal œconomy, whether watchful prudence, or the tender, yet steady fidelity of friendship, had the ascendant in her habitual conduct. The domestic virtues, in which she excelled, exhibited an example worthy of the imitation of every mother and of every wife.

ABOUT the year 1741, she partook a happy share in the gracious shower of divine influence ; which was so plenteously rained from heaven in that memorable day. From that time, her virtues put on a new and more beautiful aspect : illustrated with the charms of unaffected piety, they shone out with attractives superior to those of all their former beauty. Her knowledge in religion grew apace ; and soon attained a distinguished eminence. In August 1746 she made a public profession of christianity, and entered into covenant with this church.

THIS profession she both justified and adorned by a life of holiness ; and hence her fellowship was savoury and profitable to her christian friends ; and continued steady and uninterrupted to the end of her race.

IN the course of the last spring, she sunk into a painful disease, in which she languished for some time. Through the whole progress of the distemper ;

distemper, she presented to all spectators a conspicuous pattern of piety, patience and humble submission to the will of God; frequently she bore her solemn testimony to the truth of the religion she had professed, and the doctrines she had usually been taught among you: repeatedly she gave her parting counsels to her children--- and repeatedly did she express to me, and others near her, the assured hopes she entertained of entering soon into the inheritance of the saints in light. And into that happy state, we doubt not, it pleased her LORD, out of his sovereign grace, to admit her, on the 13th day of *June*, 1787, in the 79th year of her age.

FOR almost 59 years of that time she had lived most happily, in the bonds of marriage, with our late deceased friend.—And eminent was the aid he derived from her all the while, in the business of his calling, as well as in the management of his family; and it was not a little owing to that aid, that the laudable industry with which he pursued his occupation, as a ship-builder, for many years, was crowned with success; and issued in the acquisition of a very handsome estate.

AT what period of his life, religious impressions were first specially made on his mind, my information does not serve me. It is well known, however, that when the great revival of religion took place here, in the years 1741, 1742, 1743, and 1744; there were but few among the subjects of that glorious work, in whom the effects of its energy were more sensible, than in Mr. CROSS; and very few, any where, could be found

found more forward and zealous to promote it. Then did his virtues begin remarkably to be displayed. That Christ-like temper, of which he then had received so large a share, soon led him into those paths in which he might best follow the steps of his blessed Master; and do most honor to the religion he professed. To feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, became, from thenceforth, his delightful care. There are yet among us living witnesses, not a few, who, from their own knowledge, bear ample testimony of his many, and, sometimes, singular charities to the poor, both in this and in other towns.

ABHORRING all ostentation of his virtues, he distributed his alms with a studious regard to the divine precept; not to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth: It was impossible, however, that, with all his care to conceal it, the light of a candle which burnt so brightly could long be hid. The pity of his heart soon became the asylum of piety in distress. The munificence of his hand has been known to call the godly poor from a distant place, to raise them from the depth of indigence to comfortable livings, and to fix them in reputable stations in the community. His liberality has opened the prison-doors, has paid the debt, released the debtor, and settled the prisoner in profitable business for life.

THE law of truth dwelt on his lips. Justice and integrity reigned in his dealings. His word was equal to his bond: nor would he flinch from his promise, however much to his loss the performance might be. An unaffected primitive
simplicity

simplicity ran through all his manners, his equipage, and his dress : from a principle of fixed aversion to extravagance and shew, his house was remarkably the seat of frugality—and the theatre of virtuous and indefatigable industry : temperance and sobriety reigned within his walls—œconomy and content walked hand in hand in his dwelling,

STEADILY pursuing his own business, he never affected any share in public employments. The success of his labors, however, he did not neglect, to render a public good : whilst he derived thence an honorable maintenance for a number of families besides his own. Never unaffected with the concerns of his country, nor indifferent to its interests, he stood firm to the cause of AMERICA in its darkest days.—His patriotism was unmoved in all the shakings of ‘*The times which tried men’s souls*’—and his faith remained strong, that success would finally crown the virtuous struggles of this people, for the recovery and support of those liberties wherewith CHRIST had made them free.

It must not be forgotten, that his religion was the top of all his attainments. The devotions of morning and evening worship were as steady, in his family, as the rising and setting of the sun. Not even the greatest hurry of business could divert him from blessing his house, at the stated seasons ; and joining and leading them in waiting on his God. Of his secret devotions he endeavoured to make a secret. Yet his profiting much, from secret acts of communion with his Redeemer, was obvious to all about

about him: while he ever studied to make his conversation entertaining and agreeable, he failed not to render it instructive and edifying; and seldom left his company without dropping some hint of warning--of caution--or advice for the conviction of the sinner, or the saint's direction and comfort. Thus he became a plain and faithful reprovcr of the vices of his times; the impious and profane--the drunkard--the Sabbath-breaker--and the idler usually met him with dread.

THE doctrines of the gospel he studied with peculiar care; few in his circumstances, better understood them; or could defend them so well. But, from the time of the reformation already mentioned, his zeal for the purity and power of religion was eminently distinguished.--At that crisis, he boldly stood forth and openly espoused what he tho't the cause of God; against a strong tide of opposition. His heart, his house, and his purse were open to all whom he considered as honestly laboring to promote it. The faithful preachers who pleaded that cause, found a home in his dwelling whenever they came. At length, having found a goodly number, whom he judged sincere subjects of vital religion; he animated them to form this church; and entered into covenant with them himself, in November 1746. To his benefactions and other exertions, at that time, it greatly owed its surmounting the many difficulties then in its way.

Its first stated preacher was boarded at his house, *gratis*, for the space of three years: and there was the first resort of its first settled minister;

nister: a principal share of the expence of building its first meeting-house was defrayed by himself: and, of the seven who purchased a valuable house and lot of land, and made a present of them to the *Reverend* MR. PARSONS, my worthy predecessor, soon after his coming to this town, MR. CROSS, was the chief. In the erection of this spacious building, where you now stately worship, his aids were essential; and a valuable token of his liberality to the church you behold, every day, in the excellent folio BIBLE that adorns the desk.

No hearer of the gospel was more constantly seen in his place at public worship: no hearer was more attentive there: and few more frequently felt the force of the doctrines there delivered. How often have we seen him melt into tears of joy at the news of the great salvation! How tenderly has he been wont to weep over the graceless and secure! With what ardour did he warn them to flee from the wrath to come! Earnestly did his bowels yearn for the conversion of the rising generation: bitterly he lamented the decays of vital piety so generally prevailing in these darksome days. How often have we seen him lift to heaven his withered hands and streaming eyes, in agonizing intercession for the church of *Christ*! And how anxiously engaged was his heart, during your late bereavement of your venerable Pastor, to see the gospel re-settled among you, agreeably to the principles which you professed, cannot soon be forgotten. Many now within these walls can remember the faithful testimonies he gave, both in word and writing, against what he thought to be sinful.

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It was my misfortune that my personal acquaintance with him began too late to know him when he was Mr. CROSS.--But, tho' hoary and bowed with years, he was, by his spiritual and holy conferences, made specially useful to me, since I have known him. These have often been my cordial in a gloomy hour--and have animated and encouraged me to my arduous work, times without number. I think I never finished a conversation with him, without his dropping some word to strengthen my hands, and point my eye to the great reward.

At last it has pleased God to snatch him from us, at a time when his counsels and his prayers were not less needed than formerly. He seemed, for some time, to have had premonitions of his approaching dissolution; and was frequently heard to say, he should be gone before his daughter, whose life was then despaired of by himself, and who survived him but one day.

His illness was short: and his death was in some respects, a translation. He tasted not of death while he died. During the week before he was attacked by his last sickness, he was engaged, with more than ordinary zeal, in exhorting all that came near him to examine themselves--and see well to the safety of their spiritual state; and in entreating every one to consider the danger of being deceived in their hope.

THE lethargic slumber that came on with his disease, deprived his friends, in a great measure, of the benefit of his dying testimony and advices. But when, at any time, they were able to

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rouse him a little ; though he was lost to every thing in this world, his answers on religious subjects were rational and clear : all else failed him ; yet he declared his religion stood firm—and tasted to him as sweet as ever. He charged all that enjoyed their reason, to use it to the glory of God, for he was sensible his own was now impaired : and, among the last words he said to me, was a declaration that he knew he was about to leave us—that his hopes of the inheritance of the saints in light remained strong—that he was going to another and a better world ; and that his heart rejoiced at the prospect. In this condition he continued until January the 4th, at 11 o'clock, A. M. when he gently slept away into his Master's joy in the 82d year of his age, and left a mourning church, a numerous circle of friends, and especially four loving and dutiful children, with their rising families, to lament a breach then made upon them, too great ever to be healed in this vale of tears.

BUT it was not long before the youngest of the four followed her father. Mrs. MARTHA NOWEL had been languishing in a consumptive case for some months before he was seized ; and expired at 11 o'clock, A. M. on the 5th of *January*, and, on the next Wednesday, was followed by a solemn mournful train, together with her father, and buried with him in one grave, *Ætat.* 39.

IN her were assembled all the accomplishments of a fine female character. To an ingenious and penetrating mind, which sought every mean of improvement, were added a sweetness and modesty that made her amiable in every relation.

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CONVICTIONS of a state of sin and misery had frequently followed her from her youth--and had sometimes arisen to great and unutterable distress; and then vanished away. About three years ago, they returned with greater power than ever:—her heart was laid open before her—she found herself dead in trespasses and sins—her own righteousness appeared but filthy rags—and all her hopes of eternal life were cut off—till, on one of the Sabbaths in the month of *April*, that year, when sitting in this place, under a Sermon, from Ps. xix. 11.—She said, divine light broke into her mind: she beheld the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST; and, by the drawings of Almighty love, she was brought to close with, and embrace the offered Redeemer on his own terms; and went down to her house filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—This celestial frame of spirit was, with some intervals of darkness, repeatedly indulged to her afterwards. But, in her last sickness, at the close of a season of great anxiety and distress, she was filled with light and love, even to raptures:—these settled down into a sweet peace that passed understanding:—which was supported, to the last, by a faith that triumphed over all opposition; and so she closed her eyes on a world of darkness; and, we doubt not, instantly opened them in eternal day.

THUS, from that one house, in the space of twenty-one months, were four adult persons carried, as charity concludes, to the house not made with hands.* SINGU-

* MISS SARAH CROSS, an elder sister of her's, was the first in this list: A woman the most remarkable for sagacity and virtue that ever I saw, in her peculiar circumstances.

SINGULARLY instructive may this train of providences be to all who duly attend to it. But as it directs its voice more especially to some than to others ; so, it is incumbent on me to echo it more especially to their ears.

SUFFER me then, in the first place, to address a few words to the mourning children of the dear deceased, and their numerous rising families, present,

My Honored Friends,

THE strokes of righteous heaven have lately fallen on you in thick succession. A venerable father and an inestimable mother, with two beloved sisters, have been snatched from you in a short time. Most cordially do I sympathize with you in the sharp afflictions by which your hearts bleed, through these bereavements, this day. Altho' the goodness of the LORD was pleased to continue the lives of your honored parents to you, to a good old age ; yet the stroke that has now taken them from your head, is not less solemn and affecting. Invaluable was the privilege indulged you, while you enjoyed them. That boon of heaven is now withdrawn forever. And it is now your part to reflect on the value of the enjoyment you have lost—and on the improvements you have made of it. How many careful instructions have distilled from their lips into your ears—with how many tender admonitions have they followed you ! How many ardent petitions have they daily sent up to heaven on your behalf, for a long course of years ! Petitions now on file—and which cannot fail of

of answers in due time.—How savory were the patterns of virtue and religion which Heaven has set before your eyes, in those with whom nature placed you in the nearest relation :--religion which you have seen uniform and triumphant even in death. Now your faithful monitors are no more ! No more shall you sit under their refreshing and persuasive addresses ! But, may I not trust that the impressions made by them will be retained still warm on your hearts, and operative on your lives ?

PERMIT me on their behalf and your own, to exhort you now ; that, while you bow submissive to the righteous stroke of Heaven, you may not delay to rise up--eagerly to snatch the falling mantle of your ascending friends--and seriously to follow them so far as they followed CHRIST. Thus will you best embalm their memories. No monuments of marble could reflect so much honor on their names.

THINK you see them beckon to you from the tomb ; and hear them accost you in these endearing strains ; “ *Dear children*, consider that “ religion which you saw in us. It has borne “ us through all the trials of life. It has supported us in the important hour of death.--- “ It has ushered us into a state of real and of perfect bliss, which you, at present, cannot conceive. Be persuaded, by parents that ever “ loved you, and now love more perfectly than “ ever ; to make that religion your own. Let “ no worldly object divert you from the pursuit “ of it. Rest not, till you all have attained an “ assured interest in CHRIST. It will be but a little

" little while till we shall meet with you again.
 " O let us meet to part no more forever ! O !
 " let us not see one of you or your's, at our
 " LORD's left hand, on the decisive day ; lest
 " all our cares and all our warnings--lest all our
 " tears and all our prayers--rise up as swift wit-
 " nesses then, to your final condemnation. "

LISTEN to this voice from the dead, my dear
 friends ; embrace these friendly counsels. Obey
 the dictates of your dear departed parents--dictates
 delivered, as from the battlements of the celestial
 city---Resolved on full and speedy compliance
 with their call, rise up now and call them blest-
 ed. And so, when you also shall have finished
 your course, may you all be joined to the same
 blessed society with them ; and with them join,
 for ever, in the song of MOSES and the LAMB.

THE *brother and sisters* of our deceased friend,
 will also be pleased to permit me, in the next
 place, to remind them that the lives and deaths
 we this day deplore, may serve as fresh proofs
 of the truth of that religion which they now
 profess. With this additional encouragement,
 then, be entreated, my friends, to quicken your
 pace. Your race is nearly finished, O ! be
 zealous now for GOD, more than ever. Live
 much in a little time. Be in earnest to have your
 testimony finished before you come to a death-
 bed ; lest you may not be permitted to say much
 when you come there. Live more above all
 sublunary worlds. Keep your eye on the better
 country. Not content with past attainments, press
 forward to the mark for the prize set before you.
 Not sufficed by habitual preparation only ; labor
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for actual readiness for death. Steadily pursue greater degrees of holiness, until you are conscious of meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light: and stand ready, at a moment's warning, to drop this tabernacle, and go to the house eternal in the heavens. Pick up the fragments of your remaining time; and, when the long-wished hour shall come, may you also be able, on good grounds, each to say, I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; and now I go to possess a crown of life.

IN the third place, I beg leave to call upon you, my dear brethren, the officers who compose the SESSION of this church, to realize it, this day, that an especial part of the improvement of this providence is required at your hands. Various and affecting have been the breaches, which death has made upon your numbers, since my connection with you began. Nine ruling elders and two deacons have we been called to convey to the dust, within little more than eight years. All of them savory and excellent christians, & eminent supports of vital religion among us.

AND now it has pleased God to bereave you of one, who has stood in the place of both father and brother, in the church, for a long period of time. Upwards of forty-one years has he been of your body. I need not now remind you of the essential aids--the wise counsels--the faithful directions--the seasonable encouragements---the reviving comforts you received, during that time, from his zealous exertions and fervent prayers. They are yet warm in your remembrance. Suffer me, however, now to remark,

mark that, as Heaven has thinned your numbers --your work has been growing on your hands. Be not discouraged by these dispensations. Let them rather inflame your zeal, and animate your diligence in that work. Let not the prophet's reproof ever be applicable to you, that the diseased ye have not strengthened; neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye sought that which was lost.^a On the contrary, be ever exerting your utmost for the service of God; and the best good of all the flock committed to you, and be encouraged therein, by the joyful prospect; that every breach you heal--every broken bone you restore--every sinner you are the means of reclaiming--and every faint you help to comfort and support, in this state of trial, will become a jewel in your crown, at the day of the restitution of all things.

FOURTHLY and lastly, I would mingle my tears with those of this church in general, under the repeated and sensible frowns of heaven upon us in the bereavements we have suffered. Bound, as we are, thankfully to adore the Sovereign grace that has added seventy-one members to your communion, since my pastoral relation to you commenced,--nine of whom have been received in the course of the year past; ought we not solemnly to feel, and deeply to be humbled under the righteous hand of the *Most High*, that, in that period, has taken away no less than fifty-eight of your beloved brethren and sisters; of whom fifteen have been called home during the last year? I

(a) Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4, 5.

I AM sure it will not offend one humble and sincere christian among you, if I add that, when I compare, in point of religion, the members departed, with those who have arisen to fill their places; there appears no greater resemblance than was once found between the first temple and the second. Where? Oh! where is the life—the zeal—the spirituality? Where is the heavenly-mindedness—and holy activity? Where the savory conversations—the humility—the self-denial—the near communion usually seen among the first members of this church? What is become of the sweet meetings—the holy societies—the happy days of fasting and of prayer—which were wont to turn your private houses into *Bethels*, and this sacred place into the gate of heaven? Alas! How is our gold become dim? How is our most fine gold changed? Let us, then, this day, search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Repent, and do your first works; lest GOD actually do what he has of late repeatedly threatened—lest he come quickly and remove our candlestick out of its place. Let me tell you, CHRIST loathes this lukewarmness—and will suddenly spew it out of his mouth. Rise up then, and strengthen the things that remain, and are ready to die. Look about you, my dear sirs; see errors raging on every hand—vice prevailing—iniquity abounding—the love of many waxing cold—the spirit of GOD withdrawn—and one after another of your fathers taken from your head! Is not evil gone forth against this generation? are not these doves fled to their windows, before an approaching storm? Let us now rend our hearts—and not our garments! and O! let the little remnant of wrest-

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lers in our *Israel*—the few names, in our *Sardis*, that have not defiled their garment—take hold of a departing God; besiege the throne of grace with redoubled fervour, for an out-pouring of the HOLY SPIRIT'S special influence on this church; that its primitive glory may not quite vanish, and *Ichabod* be written on its doors. O, entreat him for your little ones; that they may never be suffered to forget the God of their fathers! Renew your covenant with the LORD: and learn to walk more worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called: that, so, we all may be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and be so happy as, then, to be admitted to join with the dear deceased, and all the other worthies who have gone before us; in singing, worthy is the LAMB that was slain, to receive honor and glory and blessing: and therefore blessing and glory and honor and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the LAMB, forever, and ever!

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